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Abstract

Notions of "smart energy systems" are pervasive in discussions of a low carbon transition and much work is devoted to developing "smart energy technologies" and analyzing their economic potential. However, users, i.e. civil society receive only little attention and are mainly described as "energy consumers". The aim of this research project is to explore how civil society can get a more active role in the transition towards a low carbon energy system. Through qualitative case-study methods and scenario work, we explore the role of "energy users" for the innovative design and development of large technological systems. We ask whether the envisioned smart energy systems have potential to support more active innovation roles for the individuals using energy systems than what have been described by previous studies. Moreover, we discuss whether and how such roles allow for a democratic as well as socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable development of energy provision.